

YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME.

Acts, 1:8.

By Mr. Wm. Laurie Hill.

It was not until the disciples had received power, after the Holy Ghost came upon them, that they were to fulfill their promised destiny as witness-bearers for Jesus.

In the upper room in Jerusalem had gathered the feeble, few, affrighted sheep that had scattered at beholding the terrors of that crucifixion scene. We do not doubt that the agonizing ninth hour cry of the Master, "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" was still ringing in their ears, and their hearts were sore and despondent. It was in this hour of darkness and gloomy doubts that the Master came into their midst in his glorious resurrection body, and (after a brief forty days' sojourn) leading them out toward the home of Mary and Martha, plainly to be seen in the distance, he gives them his last commands and promises, and from Olivet he ascended to the Father in glory and hath prepared for his faithful ones, their ever abiding home.

His command was, "Depart not from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me."

His Promise Was—

"Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria."

Did it stop there? Nay, but "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." He gave yet another promise that rings down the ages and cheers the hearts of our twentieth century witnesses. Mathew makes this record, chapter 28:20, "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The Command is Glorious.

"Go preach!" The other command, "Wait at Jerusalem," was hard to obey. With so much to be done, waiting doubtless seemed to some of the apostles, especially impetuous Peter, a poor way to accomplish anything. But while they were waiting they held that ten days' prayer-meeting, and lo! the Holy Spirit (according to promise), descended with tremendous power, and the growth of that infant church was startling to the faith even of the chosen disciples.

The energizing power of the Holy Spirit is the great motor of a living Church. Nearly twenty centuries have passed and the growth of Christianity has not been in the ratio established at Pentecost, just because the witnesses have failed to bear such witness as did the apostles in those early days.

One sermon preached by the once backsliding Peter was the means of converting three thousand souls, and the young church had "daily added to it of such as shall be saved."

The Forward Movement.

This wonderful awakening in our day had its origin not so much among the ministry as among the laymen of the Church. Thousands of professing Christians, all over our own and other lands, are now awake to the mighty truth, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." Every member of the body of Christ is a witness for Christ. If not, he or she is like a dead limb clinging to a live body.

We are having in this twentieth century a wonderful reproduction of that scene in "The Valley of Vision," Ezekiel, chapter 37.

The prophet sees in the valley the earth strewn with dead men's bones, and he says "they were very dry."

The question comes to the prophet, "Son of Man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord, thou knowest." Again came the words, "Prophecy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord." Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live."

And as the prophet watches the transformation scene he sees bone come to bone, and sinews and flesh cover the bones, "but there was no breath in them." Then came the message, "Prophecy unto the wind: thus saith the Lord Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live;" "and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

Brethren of the twentieth century, is not this but a picture, over twenty-five hundred years old of our beloved Church?

We have been asleep all these years, and while we have slept millions of human souls have passed into eternity to whom we have failed to tell about the wonderful story of redeeming love.

We do thank God that the Holy Spirit has at last aroused from slumber a mighty host that will not fail to stand forth and witness for Jesus Christ. The recent meeting at Birmingham of the laymen and the ministry of the Southern Presbyterian Church, the meetings being held by Christian men of all denominations throughout the world, are the advance guard of a mighty army that shall bear the white banner of the cross to the ends of the earth, "Conquering and to conquer," for King Immanuel.

"Waft, waft ye winds his story,
And you, ye waters roll,
Till like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o'er our ransomed nature,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign!"

Floral Manse, N. C.

SOWING AND REAPING.

There was a year in the little church at Blantyre when but one convert was welcomed to the Lord's table, but that lad was David Livingstone; and as he was sown in the soil of his much loved Africa, he has become the seed germ of that mighty ingathering of souls which is being garnered into the heavenly storehouse.

A young Sunday school teacher, a poor seamstress, one Sunday gave to a rough street Arab a shilling to induce him to go to a Sunday school. That boy, Amos Sutton, was converted, went to work as a missionary among the Telugus, and after twenty-five years, ten thousand converts were won in a single year.—Examiner.